

A HOMILY ON THE ROLE OF JUDAISM IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

BY SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The famous St. John Chrysostom, the greatest saint of the Eastern Christian world, is least known for his harsh and passionate criticism of the Jews and the Judaizers of Constantinople. Here is a sampling of his writings, suppressed by almost every mainstream historical journal in the world.

The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us, one after the other and in quick succession: the feast of trumpets, the feast of tabernacles, the fasts. There are many in our ranks who say they think as we do. Yet some of these are going to watch the festivals, and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts. I wish to drive this perverse custom from the church right now. [Now] that the Jewish festivals are close by and at the very door, if I should fail to cure those who are sick with the Judaizing disease, I am afraid that, because of their ill-suited association and deep ignorance, some Christians may partake in the Jews' transgressions. Once they have done so, I fear my homilies on these transgressions will be in vain. For if they hear no word from me today, they will then join the Jews in their fasts; once they have committed this sin, it will be useless for me to apply the remedy.

[Do] not be surprised that I called the Jews pitiable. They really are pitiable and miserable. When so many blessings from heaven came into their hands, they thrust them aside and were at great pains to reject them. The morning sun of justice arose for them, but they thrust aside its rays and still sit in darkness. We, who were nurtured by darkness, drew the light to ourselves and were freed from the gloom of their error. They were the branches of that holy root, but those branches were broken. We had no share in the root, but we did reap the fruit of godliness. From their childhood they read the prophets, but they crucified Him Whom the prophets had foretold. We did not hear the divine prophecies but we did worship



These churches in the important See of Cappadocia in Turkey are carved into the peculiar natural rock formations. Although the Middle East was a part of "Europe" previous to the rise of Islam, the Greek-Hellenic-Byzantine influences did not always eliminate more provincial forms of art, such as this unusual architectural style. Tensions between Greek civilization and provincial nativism caused many difficulties for both church and state in Byzantium.

Him of Whom they prophesied. And so they are pitiful because they rejected the blessings which were sent to them, while others seized hold of these blessings and drew them to themselves. Although those Jews had been called to the adoption of sons, they fell to kinship with dogs; we who were dogs received the strength, through God's grace, to put aside the irrational nature which was ours and to rise to the honor of sons. How do I prove this? Christ said: "It is not fair to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs." Christ was speaking to the Canaanite woman when He called the Jews children and the Gentiles dogs.

But see how thereafter the order was changed about: they became dogs, and we became the children. Paul said of the Jews: "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the mutilation. For we are the circumcision." Do you see how those who at first were children became dogs? Do you wish to find out how we, who at first were dogs, became children? "But to as many as received him, he gave the power of becoming sons of God."

Nothing is more miserable than those people who never failed to attack their own salvation. When there was need to observe the Law, they trampled it underfoot. Now that the Law has ceased to bind, they obstinately strive to observe it. What could be more pitiable than those who provoke God not only by transgressing the Law but also by keeping it? On this account Stephen said: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart, you always resist the Holy Spirit," not only by transgressing the Law but also by wishing to observe it at the wrong time.

Stephen was right in calling them stiff-necked. For they failed to take up the yoke of Christ, although it was sweet and had nothing about it which was either burdensome or oppressive. For he said: "Learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart," and "Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is sweet and my burden light." Nonetheless they failed to take up the yoke because of the stiffness of their necks. Not only did they fail to take it up but they broke it and destroyed it. For Jeremiah said: "Long ago you broke your yoke and burst your bonds." It was not Paul who said this but the voice of the prophet speaking loud and clear. When he spoke of the yoke and the bonds, he meant the symbols of rule, because the Jews rejected the rule of Christ when they said: "We have no king but Caesar." You Jews broke the yoke, you burst the bonds, you cast yourselves out of the kingdom of heaven, and you made yourselves subject to the rule of men. Please consider with me

how accurately the prophet hinted that their hearts were uncontrolled. He did not say: "You set aside the yoke," but, "You broke the yoke," and this is the crime of untamed beasts, who are uncontrolled and reject rule.

But what is the source of this hardness? It comes from gluttony and drunkenness. Who says so? Moses himself. "Israel ate and was filled, and the darling grew fat and frisky." When brute animals feed from a full manger, they grow plump and become more obstinate and hard to hold in check; they endure neither the yoke, the reins nor the hand of the charioteer. Just so the Jewish people were driven by their drunkenness and plumpness to the ultimate evil; they kicked about, they failed to accept the yoke of Christ, nor did they pull the plow of his teaching. Another prophet hinted at this when he said: "Israel is as obstinate as a stubborn heifer." And still another called the Jews "an untamed calf."

Although such beasts are unfit for work, they are fit for killing. And this is what happened to the Jews: while they were making themselves unfit for work, they grew fit for slaughter. This is why Christ said: "But as for these my enemies, who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and slay them."¹

You Jews should have fasted then, when drunkenness was doing those terrible things to you, when your gluttony was giving birth to your ungodliness—not now. Now your fasting is untimely and an abomination. Who said so? Isaiah himself when he called out in a loud voice: "I did not choose this fast, say the Lord." Why? "You quarrel and squabble when you fast and strike those subjects to you with your fists." But if your fasting was an abomination when you were striking your fellow slaves, does it become acceptable now that you have slain your Master? How could that be right?

The man who fasts should be properly restrained, contrite, humbled—not drunk with anger. But do you strike your fellow slaves? In Isaiah's day they quarreled and squabbled when they fasted; now when fast[ing], they go in for excesses and the ultimate licentiousness, dancing with bare feet in the marketplace. The pretext is that they are fasting, but they act like men who are drunk. Hear how the prophet bid them to fast: "Sanctify a fast," he said. He did not say: "Make a parade of your fasting," but "call an assembly; gather together the ancients." But these Jews are gathering choruses of effeminate and a great rubbish heap of harlots; they drag into the synagogue the whole theater, actors and all. For there is no difference between the theater

and the synagogue. I know that some suspect me of rashness because I said there is no difference between the theater and the synagogue; but I suspect them of rashness if they do not think that this is so. If my declaration that the two are the same rests on my own authority, then charge me with rashness. But if the words I speak are the words of the prophet, then accept his decision.

Many, I know, respect the Jews and think that their present way of life is a venerable one. This is why I hasten to uproot and tear out this deadly opinion. I said that the synagogue is no better than a theater and I bring forward a prophet as my witness. Surely the Jews are not more deserving of belief than their prophets. "You had a harlot's brow; you became shameless before all." Where a harlot has set herself up, that place is a brothel. But the synagogue is not only a brothel and a theater; it also is a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts. Jeremiah said: "Your house has become for me the den of a hyena." He does not simply say "of wild beast," but "of a filthy wild beast," and again: "I have abandoned my house, I have cast off my inheritance." But when God forsakes a people, what hope of salvation is left? When God forsakes a place, that place becomes the dwelling of demons.

But at any rate the Jews say that they, too, adore God. God forbid that I say that. No Jew adores God. Who says so? The Son of God says so. For he said: "If you were to know my Father, you would also know me. But you neither know me nor do you know my Father." Could I produce a witness more trustworthy than the Son of God?

If, then, the Jews fail to know the Father, if they crucified the Son, if they thrust off the help of the Spirit, who should not make bold to declare plainly that the synagogue is a dwelling of demons? God is not worshiped there. Heaven forbid. From now on it remains a place of idolatry. But still some people pay it honor as a holy place.

If you see one of your brothers falling into . . . transgressions, you consider that it is someone else's misfortune, not your own; you think you have defended yourselves against your accusers when you say: "What concern of mine is it? What do I have in common with that man"?² When you say that, your words manifest the utmost hatred for mankind and a cruelty which benefits the devil. What are you saying? You are a man and share the same nature. Why speak of a common nature when you have but a single head, Christ? Do you dare to say you have nothing in common with your own mem-

WHO WAS ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM?

AN INTRODUCTION BY M. RAPHAEL JOHNSON, PH.D.

St. John Chrysostom (from Chrysostomos, meaning “golden mouthed” or, as we would say, “golden tongued”), who lived within the confines of the Byzantine empire from c. A.D. 347 to 407, was the patriarch of Constantinople and one of the greatest theologians of the eastern church. He is a major saint in both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, and the eastern church has given him the title of “ecumenical doctor” (along with Saints Gregory the Theologian and Basil the Great), meaning a teacher of the universal church.

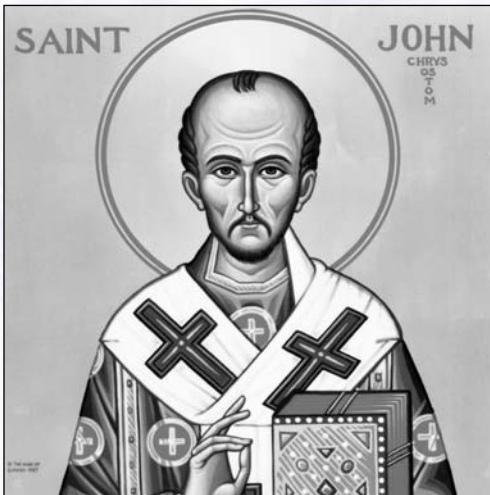
Originally from Antioch in Syria, John Chrysostom was deeply immersed in Greek scholarship and rhetoric. After meeting the saintly bishop Meletius around 367, he decided to become an ascetic and to enter the Orthodox Church (his father was a pagan). He was ordained a priest in 386, and began to write and preach at a level practically unheard of in the Near East at the time. His reputation for brilliance spread throughout both the eastern and western realms. He was consecrated as patriarch of Constantinople in 397, a See that he quickly reformed. His acid personality did not make him popular, but few doubted that his reforms were necessary. He ordered a drastic reduction in the expenses of the patriarchal household. He confined the “wandering monks” to their monasteries and increased monastic discipline. His harsh language was generally directed against the wealthy members of the court circle in Byzantium who were not exactly used to being regularly condemned. It was not long before he was considered a great populist in economics.

Chrysostom’s popularity always remained high with the middle and lower classes, but continually waned among the wealthy. Unfortunately, this contempt also spread to the arrogant and unintelligent empress, Eudoxia, who never ceased to cause the saint much difficulty. In so doing, the empress, always self-indulgent and pompous, made common cause with the Jews and polytheists against Chrysostom. In 403, Chrysostom delivered a sermon condemning the extravagant tastes of Byzantine upper-class women, and the empress thought herself personally alluded to (which she probably was; St. John cared little whom he offended). After much intrigue, Chrysostom was uncanonically deposed. Again reinstated (after Eudoxia thought a recent earthquake was a sign of divine disfavor for her actions), this fearless saint simply continued his speaking and writing against the luxury of the ruling classes, speculative and pastoral theology, and scripture commentary (the latter for which he is rightfully the most famous).

After a gaudy silver statue of the empress was erected suspiciously near the *Hagia Sophia* (the Cathedral of the Divine Wisdom, the seat of the patriarchate), the saint railed against the pagan and Jewish Dionysian revelry that went on around it during its unveiling, timed purposely to coincide with church services. At this time, the desperate polytheists who remained within the Christian empire had formed an alliance of convenience with the Jews, whose contempt for Christian ways was well known.

This homily is an edited version of one of Chrysostom’s speeches against the behavior of the Jews. It is often removed from compilations of Chrysostom’s work and is a source for continued Jewish invective against the ancient church. It is primarily an attack on Jewish contempt for even their own (or allegedly their own) Torah (Old Testament) traditions, soon to be overthrown by the developing Talmudic law. This sermon’s heavy theological nature was primarily meant to show that the Torah’s prophetic condemnations and criticisms of ancient Israel were still applicable in his day. In other words, Chrysostom approached the matter as a theologian. St. John sometimes uses flowery, theological—and oftentimes extremely harsh—language that might be unfamiliar or upsetting to some of our readers.

It is republished here for several reasons. First, it is published to show the mind of the ancient church (of which Chrysostom was one of the primary representatives) concerning the Jews. Second, it is a historical document that clearly shows, from a prescient and perceptive eyewitness, the behavior of the Jews in a Christian society that they despised. It is published, third, to show that the criticisms of Jewish behavior in recent decades are not different in any major respect than that of Chrysostom’s day. The saint’s popularity was such as to strongly suggest that the masses of Byzantium supported John’s position. St. John Chrysostom’s work is an example of a day when Christianity was truly orthodox, not tainted and watered down with liberal ideology, Jewish complaints and the burning desire to be accepted by the powerful classes. ♦



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bers? In what sense do you admit that Christ is the head of the church? For certainly it is the function of the head to join all the limbs together, to order them carefully to each other, and to bind them into one nature. But if you have nothing in common with your members, then you have nothing in common with your brother, nor do you have Christ as your head.

The Jews frighten you as if you were little children, and you do not see it. Many wicked slaves show frightening and ridiculous masks to youngsters—the masks are not frightening by their nature, but they seem so to the children's simple minds—and in this way they stir up many a laugh. This is the way the Jews frighten the simpler-minded Christians with the bugbears and hobgoblins of their shrines. Yet how could their ridiculous and disgraceful synagogues frighten you? Are they not the shrines of men who have been rejected, dishonored, and condemned?

Our churches are not like that; they are truly frightening and filled with fear. God's presence makes a place frightening because he has power over life and death. In our churches we hear countless homilies on eternal punishments, on rivers of fire, on the venomous worms, on bonds that cannot be burst, or exterior darkness. But the Jews neither know nor dream of these things. They live for their bellies, they gape for the things of this world, their condition is not better than that of pigs or goats because of their wanton ways and excessive gluttony. They know but one thing: to fill their bellies and be drunk, to get all cut and bruised, to be hurt and wounded while fighting for their favorite charioteers.³

Tell me, then, are their shrines awful and frightening? Who would say so? What reasons do we have for thinking that they are frightening unless someone should tell us that dishonored slaves, who have no right to speak and who have been driven from their Master's home, should frighten us, who have been given honor and the freedom to speak? Certainly this is not the case. Inns are not more august than royal palaces. Indeed the synagogue is less deserving of honor than any inn. It is not merely a lodging place for robbers and cheats but also for demons. This is true not only of the synagogues but also of the souls of the Jews, as I shall try to prove at the end of my homily.

I urge you to keep my words in your minds in a special way. For I am not now speaking for show or applause but to cure your souls. And what else is left for me to say when some of you are still sick although there are so many physicians to effect a cure?



Still standing today are the walls of Constantinople, built under the reign of Theodosius II. Over 100 feet thick, these fortifications protected the imperial city from literally hundreds of invasions, only giving way, and this through human error, after 1,000 years of nearly constant warfare.

There were 12 apostles, and they drew the whole world to themselves. The greater portion of the city is Christian, yet some are still sick with the Judaizing disease. And what could we, who are healthy, say in our own defense? Surely those who are sick deserve to be accused. But we are not free from blame, because we have neglected them in their hour of illness; if we had shown great concern for them and they had the benefit of this care, they could not possibly still be sick.

Let me get the start on you by saying this now, so that each of you may win over his brother. Even if you must impose restraint, even if you must use force, even if you must treat him ill and obstinately, do everything to save him from the devil's snare and to free him from fellowship with those who slew Christ.

Tell me this. Suppose you were to see a man who had been unjustly condemned being led to execution through the marketplace. Suppose it were in your power to save him from the hands of the public executioner. Would you not do all you could to keep him from being dragged off? But now you see your own brother being dragged off unjustly to the depth of destruction. And it is not the executioner who drags him off, but the devil. Would you be so bold as not to do your part toward rescuing him from his transgression? If you don't help him, what

excuse would you find? But your brother is stronger and more powerful than you. Show him to me. If he will stand fast in his obstinate resolve, I shall choose to risk my life rather than let him enter the doors of the synagogue.

I shall say to him: What fellowship do you have with the free Jerusalem, with the Jerusalem above? You chose the one below; be a slave with that earthly Jerusalem which, according to the word of the Apostle, is a slave together with her children. Do you fast with the Jews? Then take off your shoes with the Jews, and walk barefoot in the marketplace, and share with them in their indecency and laughter. But you would not chose to do this because you are ashamed and apt to blush. Are you ashamed to share with them in outward appearance but unashamed to share in their impiety? What excuse will you have, you who are only half a Christian?

Believe me, I shall risk my life before I would neglect any one who is sick with this disease—if I see him. If I fail to see him, surely God will grant me pardon. And let each one of you consider this matter; let him not think it is something of secondary importance. Do you take no notice of what the deacon continuously calls out in the mysteries? "Recognize one another," he says.⁴ Do you not see how he entrusts to you the careful examination of your brothers? Do this in the case of Judaizers, too. When

you observe someone Judaizing, take hold of him, show him what he is doing, so that you may not yourself be an accessory to the risk he runs.

If any Roman soldier serving overseas is caught favoring the barbarians and the Persians, not only is he in danger but so also is everyone who was aware of how this [man] felt and failed to make this fact known to the general. Since you are the army of Christ, be overly careful in searching to see if anyone favoring an alien faith has mingled among you, and make his presence known—not so that we may put him to death, as those generals did, nor that we may punish him or take our vengeance upon him, but that we may free him from his error and ungodliness and make him entirely our own.

If you are unwilling to do this, if you know of such a person but conceal him, be sure that both you and he will be subject to the same penalty. For Paul subjects to chastisement and punishment not only those who commit acts of wickedness but also those who approve what they have done. The prophet, too, brings to the same judgment not only thieves but also [those] who run with thieves. And this is quite reasonable. For if a man is aware of a criminal's actions but covers them up and conceals them, he is providing a stronger basis for the criminal to be careless of the law and making him less afraid in his career of crime.

Since there are some who think of the synagogue as a holy place, I must say a few words to them. Why do you [revere] that

place? Must you not despise it, hold it in abomination, run away from it? They answer that the law and the books of the prophets are kept there. What is this? Will any place where these books are be a holy place? By no means. This is the reason above all others why I hate the synagogue and abhor it. They have the prophets but [do] not believe them; they read the sacred writings but reject their witness—and this is a mark of men guilty of the greatest outrage.

Why do I speak about the books and the synagogues? In time of persecution, the public executioners lay hold of the bodies of the martyrs, they scourge them, and tear them to pieces. Does it make the executioners' hands holy because they lay hold of the body of holy men? Heaven forbid. The hands which grasped and held the bodies of the holy ones still stay unholy. Why? Because those executioners did a wicked thing when they laid their hands upon the holy. And will those who handle and outrage the writings of the holy ones be any more venerable for this than those who executed the martyrs? Would that not be the ultimate foolishness? If the maltreated bodies of the martyrs do not sanctify those who maltreated them but even add to their blood-guilt, much less could the Scriptures, if read without belief, ever help those who read without believing. The very act of deliberately choosing to maltreat the Scriptures convicts them of greater godlessness.

If they did not have the prophets, they

would not deserve such punishment; if they had not read the sacred books, they would not be so unclean and so unholy. But, as it is, they have been stripped of all excuse. They do have the heralds of the truth but, with hostile heart, they set themselves against the prophets and the truth they speak. So it is for this reason that they would be all the more profane and blood-guilty: they have the prophets, but they treat them with hostile hearts.

So it is that I exhort you to flee and shun their gatherings. The harm they bring to our weaker brothers is not slight; they offer no slight excuse to sustain to the folly of the Jews. For when they see that you, who worship the Christ whom they crucified, are reverently following their rituals, how can they fail to think that the rites they have performed are the best and that our ceremonies are worthless? For after you worship and adore at our mysteries, you run to the very men who destroy our rites. Paul said: "If a man sees you that have knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not his conscience, being weak, be emboldened to eat those things which are sacrificed to idols?" And let me say: If a man sees you that have knowledge come into the synagogue and participate in the festival of the trumpets, shall not his conscience, being weak, be emboldened to admire what the Jews do? He who falls not only pays the penalty for his own fall, but he is also punished because he trips others as well. But the man who has stood firm is rewarded not only because of his own virtue but people

THE TBR HISTORY QUIZ

- 1** Which Byzantine emperor converted to Roman Catholicism?

2 Who was the last emperor to rule Byzantium?

3 Charlemagne (pictured) was given this relatively lowly title by the Byzantines (the actual Romans) soon after his coronation as “emperor of the Romans” by the pope.

4 After the Council of Florence in 1439, designed to reunite the Eastern and Western churches in exchange for another crusade against



- the near victorious Turks, turned up almost no Western activity on behalf of Byzantium. Who was the sole western monarch to take up the crusading mantle?

5 Why did Italians generally dominate foreign trade in Byzantium?

6 Sofia Paleologue, niece of the last Byzantine emperor, married which famous Russian ruler (pictured)?

7 Emperor Leo VI (886-912) was married 4 times. Byzantine law prohibited





- more than 3 and he was thus forbidden to marry again by the patriarch of Constantinople. Where did Leo (right) go to receive his "dispensation?"

8 What name did the Turks give to Constantinople after they conquered it in 1453?

9 What was the original language used by the Byzantines?

10 What alphabet was one of Byzantium's more important cultural legacies to the Eastern European world?



1. John V Palaeologus in 1369, in combat defeating the Turks from the Byzantine lands. 2. Constantine XI (XII) Palaeologus (1449-1453), who died in combat defeating the Turks. They eventually took it for good and killed the emperor in 1453. 3. Merely "rex" or, translated into the vernacular of the times, "any old king anywhere in Europe". 4. Only King Alfonso of Aragon. But when he realized that he was the only one, he too did nothing—Byzantium was left to fight on alone. 5. This was because in various treaties with Venice, Italian merchants were permitted to conduct foreign trade with the Greeks, one of the reasons why the empire fell. 6. The Byzantines had a great advantage over the Greeks, they had ships, one of the reasons why the empire fell. 7. Pope Sergio III, quite pleased that an emperor was appealing to him over his own bishop, granted the dispensation. 8. Istanbul.

admire him for leading others to desire the same things.

If anyone charges me with boldness, I will in turn charge him with the utmost madness. For, tell me, is not the dwelling place of demons a place of impiety even if no god's statue stands there? Here the slayers of Christ gather together, here the Cross is driven out, here God is blasphemed, here the Father is ignored, here the Son is outraged, here the grace of the Spirit is rejected. Does not greater harm come from this place since the Jews themselves are demons? In the pagan temple the impiety is naked and obvious; it would not be easy to deceive a man of sound mind or entice him to go there. But in the synagogue there are men who say they worship God and abhor idols, men who say they have prophets and pay them honor. But by their words they make ready an abundance of bait to catch in their nets the simpler souls who are so foolish as to be caught off guard.

Finally, if the ceremonies of the Jews move you to admiration, what do you have in common with us? If the Jewish ceremonies are venerable and great, ours are lies. But if ours are true, . . . theirs are filled with deceit. I am not speaking of the Scriptures. Heaven forbid. It was the Scriptures which took me by the hand and led me to Christ. But I am talking about the ungodliness and present madness of the Jews.

Certainly it is the time for me to show that demons dwell in the synagogue, not only in the place itself but also in the souls of the Jews. As Christ said: "When an unclean spirit is gone out, he walks through dry places seeking rest. If he does not find it he says: I shall return to my house. And coming he finds it empty, swept, and garnished. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they enter into him and the last state of that man is made worse than the first. So shall it be also to this generations."

Do you see that demons dwell in their souls and that these demons are more dangerous than the ones of old? And this is very reasonable. In the old days the Jews acted impiously toward the prophets; now they outrage the Master of the prophets. Tell me this. Do you not shudder to come into the same place with men possessed, who have so many unclean spirits, who have been reared amid slaughter and bloodshed? Must you share a greeting with them and exchange a bare word? Must you not turn away from them since they are the common disgrace and infection of the whole world? Have they not come to every form of wicked-

ness? Have not all the prophets spent themselves making many and long speeches of accusation against them? What tragedy, what manner of lawlessness have they not eclipsed by their blood-guiltiness? They sacrificed their own sons and daughters to demons. They refused to recognize nature, they forgot the pangs of birth, they trod underfoot the rearing of their children, they overturned from their foundations the laws of kingship, they became more savage than any wild beast.

What else do you wish me to tell you? Shall I tell you of their plundering, their covetousness, their abandonment of the poor, their thefts, their cheating in trade? The whole day long will not be enough to give you an account of these things. But do their festivals have something solemn and great about them? They have shown that these, too, are impure. Listen to the prophets; rather, listen to God and with how strong a statement he turns his back on them: "I have found your festivals hateful, I have thrust them away from myself."

I could have said more than this, but to keep you from forgetting what I have said, I shall bring my homily to an end here with the words of Moses: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you." If any of you, whether you are here present or not, shall go to the spectacle of the trumpets, or rush off to the synagogue, . . . or take part in fasting, or share in the Sabbath, or observe any other Jewish ritual great or small, I call heaven and earth as my witnesses that I am guiltless of the blood of all of you.

These words will stand by your side and mine on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you heed them, they will bring you great confidence; if you heed them not or conceal anyone who dares to do those things, my words shall stand against you as bitter accusations. "For I have not shrunk from declaring to you the whole counsel of God."

Do not think, then, that you are doing your brothers a favor if you should see them pursuing some absurdity and should fail to accuse them with all zeal. If you lose a cloak, do you not consider as your foe not only the one who stole it but also the man who knew of the theft and refused to denounce the thief? Our common mother [the church] has lost not a cloak but a brother. The devil stole him and now holds him in Judaism. You know who stole him; you know him who was stolen. Do you see me lighting, as it were, the lamp of my instruction and searching everywhere in my grief? And do you stand silent, refusing to denounce him? What excuse will you have? Will the church not

THE SCOURGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE



This is Sultan Mehmed (or Mohammed) II, the Islamic leader who finally captured Constantinople in 1453, after nearly 1,000 years of constant warfare. Never in the history of the world has one civilization fought one enemy for this length of time. The "Latins" (Franks) were worse than useless in their defense of eastern Christendom, in or out of the Roman communion.

reckon you among her worst enemies? Will she not consider you a foe and destroyer? ♦

FOOTNOTES

¹This is a figure of speech, meaning that those who refuse to accept Jesus as their savior are doomed to eternal punishment, not that they are to be literally slain. (Luke 19:27.)

²Chrysostom here is making the point that, whereas Christians are indifferent to their heritage, the Jews are nationalistic, and this is the source of their power.

³Chariot racing was a favorite Byzantine sport, with two teams being particularly well known, the Blues (who tended to be identified with the aristocratic faction) and the Greens (representing the commoners). (Originally there was also a Red team and a White team, but these gradually went into eclipse.) In a manner similar to today's British soccer thugs, fans of the two teams would sometimes get into violent altercations with fans of the opposing team. There were political and even religious differences between the Greens and the Blues as well.

⁴This is translated today in the Byzantine liturgy as "love one another" and is an exhortation to recognize a common religious heritage as a people.